

## ABSTRACT

### Method and Apparatus for Processing Free-Format Data

A method and apparatus for processing free-format data (301) to produce a "text object" associated with the  
5 free-format data. The text object comprises a plurality of  
"component nodes" (302-312) containing attribute-type  
identifiers for elements of the free-format text and other  
data facilitating access to the text object to obtain  
information and/or change or add the free-format data.  
10 This arrangement obviates the need for the provision of  
separate database fields for each element of the  
information. Free-format data can therefore be processed  
in a similar manner to the way a human being processes  
free-format data. All elements can be accessed via the  
15 constructed text object.